

A SHORT
HISTORY
OF THE
OPPOSITION.

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A SHORT
HISTORY
OF THE
OPPOSITION
DURING THE
Last Session of Parliament.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

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THE present situation of Public Affairs calls forcibly upon every good Subject, to exert himself in the Public Service. Every individual possesses a power, which can aid and support his country. He can draw his sword in her defence, contribute to her resources, or combat with argument, and expose to just indignation, those, who have proved themselves her internal, and consequently, her unnatural enemies.

The Author of the following Essay has long entertained an opinion, that the most formidable foes of Great Britain were nursed in her own bosom: These, under the masque of Patriotism, fomented rebellion in her Colonies; and by exposing her pretended weakness, created a combination of powerful States, not only against her interest, but her very existence, as a great and independent Kingdom.

In the emergency, which is the result of that combination, two objects seem necessary to the

Public Safety. These are, the knowledge of our friends from our enemies; and that spirited exertion, which alone can extricate us, from our present situation. If the facts advanced, and encouragements exhibited, in the following Essay, shall contribute to throw light, on the one; or to add vigour to the other, the Writer has attained his purpose.

The Author of the following Essay has long entertained an opinion, that the most formidable foes of Great Britain were buried in her own bosom: That, under the mask of Patriotism, poisoned rebellion in her Colonies; and by exposing her exhausted weakness, to such a combination of powerful States, not only squelch her interests, but her very existence as an independent Kingdom.

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In the emergency, which is the result of this combination, two objects seem necessary to the public

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IN every age, and almost in every country, the ambition, which is inherent in human nature, has prompted individuals to aspire to distinction and pre-eminence, among their fellow-citizens. The means, used to obtain those objects, are various; as to render them successful, they must be accommodated to the spirit of the Government, under which they are applied. In despotic monarchies, the favour of the Prince, who is the fountain of all preferment, is generally procured by intrigue or address. In republics, influence and authority are acquired, by gaining the confidence, or by seducing the principles of the People; and, in mixed governments, like that of Great Britain,

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the nearest road to power lies between those two extremes.

The Revolution, which happened about ninety years ago, though it made but few changes in the forms of authority, established a balance of influence, between the Crown and the People. The first retained the essence, but lost much of the terror of power. The representatives of the latter having a great deal to bestow, as a body, thought themselves, as individuals, entitled to a share in a government, which they supported. A mutual dependence was created, by the possession of the means of conferring mutual favours. A Prince, who stood in need of supplies, was directed, by common prudence, where to chuse his servants. But as candidates were more numerous than offices, the disappointed never failed to persecute the successful; till, by watching faults, errors, or misfortunes, they obtained their point, and they themselves became, in their turn, the objects of attack.

As a degree of the public confidence was necessary to direct the Sovereign in his choice of servants, men who wished to be employed, took care to support, in their public appearances, the principles and perhaps the prejudices of the people. An habitual jealousy of the power
of

of the Crown, kept open the ears of the public to every alarm. Scarce any measure of Government could be so free from error, as not to be vulnerable on some popular ground. Every Opposition seized this obvious advantage, and assumed or obtained the title of "the popular party." No distinction was made, in this respect, between *Whig* and *Tory*. Each party, when out of place, adopted the same principles; and thus both were alternately dignified with the once honourable name of PATRIOTS.

The present reign began, with advantages, calculated to put an end to foolish distinctions, which ought to have expired, with the prejudices, on which they had been founded. A young prince had succeeded to the throne, who disdained to govern his people through the medium of a faction. The door of preferment was laid open to all his subjects; but though this liberal conduct might have pleased the unprejudiced, it was incapable of extinguishing party among the interested. These, though of different principles and characters, by imposing on the weak and credulous, formed new factions, on the shadows of departed political tenets. However heterogeneous before, the heat of resentment, and rage of disappointment, as it were, gradually melted them into one mass; and they revived in themselves

themselves the name, though little of the principles of WHIGS.

The vehemence of the present Opposition seems to have carried them to extremities, which supersede all former descriptions of party, and which cannot fail to defeat their views. In former times, the candidates for public favour thought it prudent to adhere, in their exhibitions, to public principles. But in our times, an eagerness to thwart the measures of Government has expelled all regard for the opinions of the people. The dignity and honour of the nation were formerly the favourite themes of Oppositions; melancholy, meanness, and despair, now fill the whole circle of patriotic oratory. With a want of prudence, as well as of decency, they tie up the hands of their country in the hour of danger. They not only justify rebellion, against her authority, but indirectly promote a foreign war against her very existence. By magnifying the power of her opponents, they endeavour to depress her spirits; by exposing her real or pretended weakness, they wish to inspire her enemies with a confidence of success.

These strange positions, and many more of the same kind, might be established, on incontestible authorities, by a plain narrative of the conduct

conduct of Opposition, since the commencement of the present parliament. But, the pursuing them through such a variety of matter, and such a length of time, would be a task of great labour, and little entertainment. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the most striking features of the last session. In the space of seven months, they have contrived to crowd together most of the absurdities of seven years; and, though the studied brevity of this disquisition must necessarily exclude many circumstances, enough, we trust, will appear to shew the principles, designs, and views of so strange a confederacy.

On the 26th of November, 1778, the fifth session of the present parliament was opened, with a speech from the throne. A complaint of the perfidy of France, in commencing hostilities, and the obstinacy of America, in refusing terms, together with a request of support, were the chief heads of the speech. It expressed, at the same time, a regret "that the efforts of
" his Majesty had not been attended with all
" the success which the justice of the cause, and
" the vigour of exertions, seemed to promise." Unanimity was, in the usual form, recommended; and surely no period in history more required the unanimous exertion of the whole nation.

Opposition

Opposition have denominated themselves "an active Opposition;" and if zeal in thwarting, assiduity in obstructing, and success in defeating public measures, merit a designation, which implies a kind of applause, they are certainly entitled to that name. The unanimity and concert, which their Sovereign requested, for the support of the interests and honour of the nation, exist only among them, for the ruin of the one, and the tarnishing of the other. A short detail of the principles, which they advanced in the first exhibitions of the season, will establish the truth of this observation. The orators in the Lower House mixed reflections on the past, with prophecies of future disasters. The first we shall submit to the judgment of the Reader; several of the latter have been already refuted by time.

Opposition opened the political campaign; with assertions, which had been often refuted; and with predictions of national disasters, which their own conduct seemed, uniformly, calculated to realize. As the public misfortunes may be deduced, from the rebellion in America, they asserted, contrary to fact, that hostilities had been first commenced by Government. They recurred to their usual prophecies, relative to foreign wars; and they even went so far as to arm Holland, our ancient ally, against this devoted kingdom.

kingdom (a). To sow discontents, among the militia, they alleged, that the officers had been scandalously neglected (b). To excite mutiny in the army and navy, they asserted that Government had employed no commander of an army, no admiral of a fleet, whom they had not disgraced, or with whom they had not quarrelled (c). With a contradiction in terms, which neither folly nor rage itself could justify, they averred that Ministry had succeeded in *no instance*; yet that fortune had been favourable in *every instance*, during the whole campaign (d). They owned, that unanimity was absolutely necessary for the safety of their country; yet, with peculiar *honesty*, avowed "that they would clog the wheels of Government, when it ought to be assisted by every man (e)."

Though the clogging the wheels of Government at home, and their encouraging the seditious abroad, had been the obvious cause of the rise and progress of the American war, they traced the cause of that war to the pretended tyranny of Great-Britain (f). Though America had continued an atrocious rebellion for many years,

(a) Mr. T. T——d's Speech, Nov. 26th, 1778.

(b) Speech of T. T——d, Nov. 26, 1778.

(c) Speech of C. F-x, Nov. 26, 1778. Speech of C——l B——é.

(d) Ibid.

(e) Ibid.

(f) Ibid.

against

against her parent and benefactress; yet they affirmed, that a war against America "is against our own country." Though the Americans have been declared *rebels*, by all the solemnity of law, by all the forms of the constitution, "they are still our fellow-subjects, "and every blow we strike is against ourselves (*b*). " Though they have broke capitulations (*i*), disregarded flags of truce (*k*), violated conventions, trampled on every principle of war, that governs civilized nations (*l*); "yet as their war is a war of passion (*m*)," we ought "to withdraw our forces entirely from their coast (*n*). " Though "offensive war is pointed out as proper for this country (*o*)," war ought not "to be offensive with respect to America." With unexampled absurdity, they alleged, that rebels in arms had a better right to "a relaxation of hostilities," than foreign enemies, whom the alliance of those rebels had excited against their country. With a perversion of terms, unknown, in any other times, they asserted, that men, whose hands are daily stained with the blood of their countrymen,

(*b*) Speech of C. F-x, Nov. 26, 1778. Speech of C—l B—6.

(*i*) Governor J—st—ne's Speech, Nov. 26, 1778.

(*k*) Admiral Gambier's Letter to Congress.

(*l*) Speech of Governor J—st—ne.

(*m*) Speech of Mr. F-x, Nov. 26, 1778.

(*n*) Ibid.

(*o*) Ibid.

ought to be treated not as enemies, but as peaceable fellow-subjects and friends (o).

In the Upper Assembly the zeal of Patriotism, as springing from higher ground, rose to a greater height. Not content to amend the Address to the Throne, it was insisted, that no Address at all should be made (p). It was asserted, that our armies were either mouldered away, by death, desertion, and sickness, or reduced by loss in battle (q). That our commerce was totally lost, our public credit drawing to annihilation, our fleet on the verge of absolute ruin (r). That nothing could save the empire, but withdrawing our troops from America, acknowledging her independence, and imploring her forgiveness (s). That it would be even imprudent, if not impossible, to persist in a war against France (t). That Spain would aid France; that Holland, as a commercial state, would treat with America; that the whole world would join against us; that we were without men, without money, without an ally, that nothing, in short, could

(o) Speeches of all the Opposition.

(p) L—d B — l's Speech, Nov. 26, 1778.

(q) L—d C — y's Speech, Nov. 26.

(r) L—d B — l's Speech.

(s) Vide Opposition Speeches, *passim*.

(t) B—p of P—rb—gh's Speech.

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save the state, but an immediate dismissal of all his Majesty's present servants, and the placing the reins of Government, in the hands of Opposition (u).

Assertions, which carried along with them their own refutation, were not likely to make converts within, nor proselytes without doors. But what the party could not effect by facts and arguments, they endeavoured to accomplish, by address and intrigue. Mismanagements, and a consequent want of success, on every side of the war, had convinced the nation, that there was an error in planning at home, or a defect in the execution abroad. Generals and Admirals had returned, from their different commands, not only without laurels, but some of them covered with disgrace or misfortune. The coldness, with which they had been received, by their country, had raised their resentment, as it hurt their pride. As Government brought forward no accusation against them, the presumption was, that they themselves were partly to blame. As men of little prudence and considerable names, are the fittest tools for the hands of party, Opposition took care to secure engines, which they hoped to play off with advantage, on the enemy.

(u) Speeches *passim*, Noy. 26, 1778.

G——— B——— ne, though a man of spirit, conducted himself, as if political prudence formed no part of his character. His enemies remarked, that he came from America, where he had lost an army, with as much confidence, as Terentius Varro returned to Rome, from the fatal fields of Cannæ. Men, in general, have less blamed his conduct abroad, than his behaviour at home. His accepting a leave of absence from a Congress, who had shamefully evaded his own convention, the remembrance of recent misfortunes, and a suspicion of former errors, justified the court, in adhering to an *etiquette*, which excludes officers, who have been unfortunate, from the Royal Presence, till they are acquitted by a Court Martial.

The General forgot his own errors, if such existed; and remembered only, what he thought, the severity of Government. He also forgot, that he had left his captive fellow-soldiers, whom he ought to have protected, from insult and oppression, by his presence; and he even eluded orders given him to return to their aid, in their melancholy and severe captivity. It was observed, upon the whole, that regret and pity were all he could hope to meet with; but, it seems, he expected approbation. Repentment arose, in his mind, as from injustice;

and with a precipitancy, which cannot easily be defended, he either sought or accepted the protection of Opposition.

Sir W—— H—— had, indeed, lost no army, but as he had decisively improved no advantage, the American war rather increased, than diminished, upon his hands. Possessed of the common *routine* of military knowledge, he seems to have been capable of securing from defeat *such* troops as *he* led against *such* an enemy: But the conducting them to any brilliant victory, and the making a decisive use of the superiority he enjoyed, appear to have been objects foreign to his talents. Sensible, perhaps, of this defect, in his own mind, he chose to prevent any reverse of fortune, by retiring from the command of the army; but as “military secessions,” in the midst of war, require an explanation, his retreat was ascribed to his having lost the confidence of men in power. The fact might be true, but it was not sufficient, to satisfy the people. Though he was received with kindness by the Sovereign, and attention by the Ministry, he perceived that he was vanishing fast from the memory of the nation. In the space of a few months, he found himself of as little account, in the estimation of Public, as any of his own commissaries;
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and, to recover his reputation, he closed eagerly, with Opposition; as they promised him their hearty assistance, in a Parliamentary Inquiry.

To these lucky aids from America, the party added a still greater acquisition in Europe. An Admiral possessed of professional reputation, equal at least to his merit, though connected with Opposition, was placed at the head of the Western Squadron. The selecting men of *opposing* principles, for the command of fleets and armies, has been long a favourite maxim of Government. This conduct may have had its foundation in liberal sentiments; but it has operated like weakness, and led to a train of misfortunes. Few officers are such "sturdy moralists," as to exclude political prejudices from the line of their duty.

Our Admiral put to sea, with one of the most powerful squadrons, that ever sailed, from the ports of this kingdom. He met the enemy; and a running fight, rather than an engagement, ensued. No trophies were lost; but no laurels were gained. The professional terms, in which the accounts of naval actions are involved, render them obscure, if not unintelligible,

ligible, to the generality of mankind. One fact, however, was universally admitted: "A superior British fleet had engaged an inferior French squadron; and neither advantage nor trophy was obtained."

A nation, accustomed to value themselves, upon naval victories, were not likely to be satisfied with a drawn battle, under such circumstances. But though no symptoms of approbation appeared, no signs of resentment were shewn. A cold silence certainly prevailed; a species of censure, more mortifying to a feeling mind, than even clamour. Had the Admiral been permitted to remain, under this cloud, he would have become a useless engine, in the hands of his party. To derive benefit from his former popularity, it was found necessary to remove the stain, which want of success had left upon his character. Some officers, in his suite, were, accordingly, induced to propagate insinuations, to the disadvantage of Vice-Admiral Sir H——P——r. That gentleman, by being in place, might be supposed to act in concert with men in power, for the ruin of his Admiral; and to make the former the *accuser* was to arm the prejudices of the people in favour of the latter.

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The Vice-Admiral being a man of more spirit than foresight, unfortunately fell into the trap laid for him by the faction. Conscious of his deserving praise, instead of censure, for his behaviour on the 27th of July, he became irritated at the injustice done to his reputation. From being the *accused*, he became the *accuser*; and this step turned the scale of opinion in favour of his opponent. In this circumstance alone, the gallant Vice-Admiral, as it afterwards appeared, was to blame. Had he demanded and insisted upon his own trial, his character would have recovered its deserved lustre, and that of the Admiral might have lost much of that splendour which was thrown upon it, by his industrious friends.

A party, who had lost the confidence of the nation, seized with eagerness the sudden change which appeared in the popular tide. Whispers artfully propagated, without doors, were improved by degrees into a general clamour. Within doors, every opportunity was taken, and every artifice used to feed the rising flame. The two Admirals, if a vulgar expression may be used, were *pitted* against each other. Much sport, or what is the same thing to Opposition, much mischief, was expected from this contest. A man of popularity was accused, by a man
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in office. The common changes of ministerial interference were rung, without ceasing, in the ears of the people. The helpless condition of INNOCENCE, when persecuted by POWER, was echoed, from every corner, by the runners, writers, and abettors of Opposition. The two houses of Parliament resounded with vehement declamations, or broken accents of whining oratory; and that amiable but much abused virtue, pity, was excited, every where, in the breasts of the deluded, the credulous and the weak.

In vain had Sir H—— P——r declared, in the most solemn and public manner, that he had not communicated his design to any man in office. In vain did men in office affirm, upon the faith of Gentlemen, that they knew nothing of the accusation, till it was officially delivered to the Admiralty. No credit was to be given to any member of a *Tory* Administration. They were leagued together in one plan of oppression, in one dark design, in one pre-concerted conspiracy, to ruin the reputation, and even to take the life, of a *Whig* Admiral.

In this general turmoil, this intemperate joy of faction, Opposition not only forgot their poor country, but even their poor friends.

friends. Sir W—— H—— could not gain their promised support, for a moment, with all the verdure of his laurels. The advantages hoped from his exculpation were not equal in themselves, and they were more distant in prospect, than the benefits to be derived from the acquittal of Admiral K——l. In vain did General B——ne endeavour to awake the pity of the party, when he failed to command their attention. In vain did he exclaim "that he was" *one* of those brave men who made the convention at Saratoga: That, however, he "claimed no single *merit* in that transaction; "that, in the face of famine, despair, and "death, he had compelled the enemy to grant "conditions, honourable, if they had been "complicd with (*)." The party were deaf to "the tale of tears," and all the attention paid to the unfortunate general scarce amounted to one "dolorous anhelation (y)," from the feeling bosom of Mr. E——d B——ke.

The conduct of Opposition, during the trial, and after the acquittal of A——l K——l, is too recent in the recollection of the public, to require more than a very general recapitulation.

(*) Almon's Debates, No. XI. p. 75.

(y) Vide Dr. Johnson on the Irish Howl, p. 13.

Their abrogating the old forms of the Admiralty, by removing a trial for a naval offence to the land, to accommodate their own purposes, their appearance at Portsmouth, upon the occasion, their biasing witnesses, their carrying all the indecencies of a play-house audience into a Court of Justice, their soliciting the officers of the navy, their sowing discontents among the common seamen, their parading the streets, for the purpose of inflaming the populace, were such mean, scandalous, and unjustifiable tricks of faction, as can scarcely be paralleled by any example in history.

The pitiful victory which they obtained over an unfortunate, because a vehement, man, was pursued with an intemperance inexcusable even in boys, and with a rancour which the most profligate and hard-hearted men, if prudent, would have concealed, to preserve, at least, the appearance of decency. That men of the first families, in this country, should disguise themselves like porters, to force illuminations by breaking windows, is a circumstance which throws an indelible stain upon the times, as well as on the party. It even appeared, that, with every inclination to commit mischief, the riotous demagogues were obliged to have recourse to the bottle, for that courage which nature

ture had denied. That in the hour of "intoxication and adscititious boldness," they attacked the feeble and old among the men, and terrified into fits and miscarriages several women, by the rude barbarity of their behaviour. That, however, as a just retribution for their wanton cruelties, many of them suffered under the hands and cudgels of the injured; and that several were carried into Roundhouses, covered with ignominious marks of the chastisement they had received.

Few men of sense, who were not connected with the views, or privy to the designs of the party, could perceive any just grounds for this species of vulgar ovation. Though the *accuser* had not brought his charges to the standard of legal proof, the *accused* had not exculpated himself to the satisfaction of the public. Those who were most willing to deny his want of conduct, regretted his want of good fortune; and a general cry went forth, that an opportunity was lost, which might never return again.

The conduct of the Admiral himself, on the occasion, was not calculated to establish any high idea of his good sense or of his principles. If he thought that he merited a triumph for the drawn battle of the 27th of July, 1778, what

are we to think of his understanding? If, on the other hand, he made himself the tool of a faction, what judgment must we form of that "dignified honour" which his friends annex to his character? A victory, which had lain concealed for seven months, and was, at length, discovered by accident, was not, intrinsically, worth the expence of many candles; and the applause of a mob is the coarsest commodity either a gentleman or his friends can purchase.

But the Faction, as well as their naval friend, acted as if they really gave credit to their own assertions and assumptions. Whilst he paraded the streets, amidst the foolish, if not hired, acclamations of a rabble, THEY were busy in weaving a wreath, for his brows, in both Houses of Parliament. Thinking, at length, they had sufficiently charged the engine with popularity, they resolved to bring it to bear, not only upon Administration, but upon their Sovereign. *They* proposed to make motions, against the former, on naval subjects; *he* undertook, with peculiar modesty, to write *rescripts* to the latter. Even before this double battery was opened, Opposition began to pre-
enjoy their expected success, with that childish intemperance which has uniformly marked their conduct.

A——l K——l having acquired, in the beginning of March, as many laurels as he was likely to obtain, his honourable relation, Mr. F-x, introduced the first of a long string of motions, which, he owned, led to an address for the removal of the first Lord of the Admiralty, and ultimately of all his Majesty's servants (z). In support of the motion, he alleged, that the noble Lord, who presided over the naval department, had, as early as the month of November 1777, solemnly pledged himself, in his official capacity, that there were thirty-five ships of the line ready for sea, and fit for actual service. That, notwithstanding this assertion, there were not six ships of the line, in a state to meet an enemy, in the month of March 1778. That early in the month of June, his honourable relation (a) was sent to cruize, on the coast of France, with twenty ships of the line only; though it was known, or ought to have been known, that there were twenty-seven ships of force lying in Brest water. From these supposed facts, he deduced this conclusion, that the Ministry, who had led the nation into so perilous a situation, ought instantly to be removed,

(z) Mr. F-x's Speech, March 3d and 8th, 1779.

(a) Admiral Keppel.

as unequal to the trust committed to their charge (b).

In opposition to these assertions, it was proved, from official documents, that, in November 1777, there were actually thirty-five ships of the line ready for service. That, in the month of March 1778, some more ships were in a state of great forwardness for sea. That the whole number, fit for meeting an enemy in June, amounted to forty-four. That when Mr. K——l was ordered to sail, with twenty ships of the line, of which a large proportion was three-deckers, there were but seventeen ships in the harbour of Brest ready for action. That should it even appear, which was by no means the case, that there actually was a greater number of ships in Brest, it was well known to seamen, that an inferior force may block up a superior one in a narrow harbour. That, upon the whole, the Board of Admiralty had placed a number of ships, adequate to the service, under the command of A——l K——l; even to the satisfaction and approbation of the Admiral himself. That, therefore, as the premises, endeavoured to be established by Opposition, were not founded in

(b) Crime enorme aux yeux du *Sieur Fox*. Gazette de France, du Vendredi 26 Mars 1779.

fact,

fact, their conclusions must of course fall to the ground (c).

Such were the assertions, which Opposition, mixed with much abuse and altercation, repeatedly echoed, from side to side, in both Houses. Though the Public, as well as Parliament, are frequently invited to an entertainment of politics, by some very *eloquent* Patriots; the dish served up is always the same. To use their own expression, "they have travelled so often over the ground," that they have trod out every appearance of vegetation; and those who are so idle as to accompany them in the "dreary journey," can neither expect amusement, nor reap advantage.

The operations of the party, *without* doors, were more decisive than their arguments *within*. Confident of success, or assuming the appearance of confidence, they had previously gained the votes of several provident members, who *wisely* look into futurity. Lazy Whigs and expecting patriots were roundly told, that to share in the spoil it was necessary to take an active part in obtaining the victory. Mandates were issued for the immediate appearance of all

(c) Lord M——ve's Speech, March 3d and 8th, 1779.
absentees,

absentees, from every corner of the kingdom. The beds of the sick, the couches of the gouty and lame were visited ; leaders were sent to the blind. In short, patriotism crowded the lobbies of both Houses, with all the mortifying pictures of age, misfortune and disease.

To aid, with a species of mutiny among seamen, the attacks of Opposition upon Admiralty, the seeds of sedition had been sown with a lavish hand at Portsmouth. Officers had been attacked through their ruling passions ; the vain with flattery, the weak with fallacious reasonings, and the avaricious and ambitious with promises. To add indecency to presumption and folly, the nation was *threatened*, with what is vulgarly called a *Round Robin*, from every seaport. An Admiral, who had made such a *splendid* figure on the 27th of July, 1778, dared to say to his Sovereign, that he would withdraw his talents from the service, unless the Admiralty, and every department of the State, were placed in the hands of men whom he could trust.

Opposition drove, with so much rapidity and so little judgment, that they overturned their own designs. Their mean, and even criminal conduct, offended the people ; and the Sovereign,

raign, with becoming dignity, rejected their
 insolent requisitions. The current turned against
 them, and their spirit vanished when their hopes
 declined. The nation discovered their insidious
 designs, their lust for power, their thirst for places.
 It was perceived that they meant to sacrifice Great
 Britain, her rights, her interests, and even honour,
 to the demagogues of America, by rendering
 her independent of the parent from whom she
 sprung. Even those who had been seduced by
 their assurances, or gained by their promises,
 finding their mistake, began to retreat. The
 friends whom they had brought from the coun-
 try, by a species of *babeas corpus*, packed up
 their cloak-bags and left the town. The beds
 of the sick, and couches of the lame, were re-
 occupied; and even the blind found their way
 home. Ad——l K——l executed his threats
 against his *devoted* country, by quitting her ser-
 vice. The muddy stream, which had over-
 flowed the whole kingdom, and covered it with
 slime, returned to its old bed; and babbled, as
 formerly, through the rugged channel of Oppo-
 sition (c).

(c) *The Gazette de France, du Vendredi 26 Mars 1779,*
 with a kind of regret, says: Auprès tous ces débats, les
 voix étant recueillies, la motion de *Sieur Fox* n'en eut que
 170 contre 204.

The hopes of the Faction had been raised so high, that disappointment depressed their minds in proportion to their former elevation. Some, who either ignorantly or fondly imagined that the nation would take their part, began to talk of a secession. A few orators are said to have actually retired, to vent the tropes of unfinished speeches to the "echo of trees and murmur of rills" on some friend's estate (*d*). But as "lifeless groves and insensible streams" are not the most encouraging audiences, the solitary patriots were induced to rejoin their friends, who, though defeated, still remained in the field.

Whilst the expectations of Opposition were at their height, by the aid received from A——K——l's acquittal, a new topic was started, which, as it promised much mischief to their country, opened a fresh prospect of advantage to the party. The trade of Ireland, and consequently its revenue, had been on the decline for some years past. The causes of that misfortune are more difficult to ascertain than the fact itself. Whether this diminution of commerce

(*d*) A certain Baronet, who in a fit of despair relative to the good *Old Cause*, has lately become a zealous *Whig*, is much given to such solitary *rehearsals* of the Speeches which he intends to *fire off*, upon the House.

proceeded

proceeded from a decrease of domestic industry, or a failure of foreign markets, it equally demanded a remedy, if it could be applied. Some steps had been accordingly taken, toward that object, in the preceding session. But it appeared, at the time, that the facility with which relief was granted, instead of satisfying Opposition, was calculated to create new demands. These demands, as they interfered with the commerce of Great Britain, were certain of being opposed: a circumstance, which could not fail to create that *desirable* confusion which suits the views of the party.

To those, who really wished to remove the evil, it appeared that the Irish legislature ought to be the best judges of the remedy. But neither that legislature, nor their constituents, had signified any dissatisfaction at the relief obtained. To convince both of the impropriety of their *peaceable* conduct, Opposition, by making demands in the name of Ireland, pointed out what she might extort from Great Britain. This artifice, they hoped, would reduce the Ministry to a disagreeable dilemma. Should they grant the demanded relief to the Irish, they could not fail to offend the whole commercial interest in Great Britain: should they refuse it, there was a prospect, by proper management, of creating

tumults, and, perhaps, of kindling a rebellion in Ireland.

Though this commercial adventure has not yet been productive of all the profit expected by the Faction, as the ship is still at sea, the cargo may turn out to some account. The inferior Irish are, and have been, in a distressed situation. The nature of the government, the tenures of the country, a listless inactivity, which always accompanies distress, a want of industry, created by domestic discouragements of various kinds, have combined to render their condition more wretched than that of almost any other people in Europe. They have long felt their own misery, without knowing well from whence it came. Our worthy Patriots, by pointing out Great Britain as the author of Irish distress, may have some chance of rousing Irish resentment. They have fomented and encouraged resistance in America, and why may they not excite rebellion in Ireland? The truth is, they seem to have injured their country beyond *their* degree of forgiveness; and if they cannot satisfy their ambition by her misfortunes, they are at least resolved to gratify their resentment by her ruin.

The attacks, in both Houses, were so similar, in manner, assertion, declamation, and invective,

vective, that it was apparent every measure had been weighed and pre-concerted in the cabinet of sedition without doors. In this political warfare, the post of honour was given to the Patriots of the Lower Assembly, where the enemy was supposed to be most vulnerable. After the battle was lost *below*, it was generally rehearsed *above*; where some noble orators wielded, with peculiar dexterity, those very weapons of scurrility and invective, which had so little availed the cause in the hands of their more humble friends.

In the slightest skirmishes, with the common enemy, the same co-operation, the same concert appeared. Though composed of such discordant members, the whole party played in unison; and every key, that was touched below, was faithfully answered by a similar note from above.

The Irish business seemed to promise such a plentiful harvest of confusion, that the whole party employed their joint labour, in preparing the soil and sowing the seed. Individuals were not, in the mean time, idle, in their separate efforts, for the benefit of the common cause. The D—— of R——d, with his usual application, tenacity, and vehemence, had introduced and supported, in the Upper

Upper House, an Inquiry into the Management of Greenwich Hospital. The nature and fate of this Inquiry, are so recent in the memory of the Public, that a particular detail is as unnecessary in itself, as it would be here out of place.

It may be sufficient to observe, that the intention of the enquiry was to criminate the first Lord of the Admiralty. That after a most tedious examination, which lasted near three months, not one of the charges was proved. That the E. of S——ch, instead of meriting censure, deserved the highest praise. That he had paid peculiar and uncommon attention to the Hospital. That he had improved its revenue, increased the number of the pensioners, prevented the admission of improper objects, made new regulations, for the more speedy recovery of the sick, and the better accommodation of those in health. That, instead of converting his superintendency of the charity to any advantage, he had abolished all sinecures of inferior offices, which had formerly been in the disposal of the first Lord. That, in direct opposition to what had been alleged, there is not one, out of 2169 pensioners at present in the Hospital, who is not intitled to the charity, by length of service, or infirmities, contracted in the discharge of duty.

Whilst

Whilst the D. of R—— d derived some hopes, to the faction, from the expected issue of the Hospital Inquiry, a more flattering prospect of criminating men in office was opened, in the Lower Assembly. Sir W—— H-we, though not publicly accused, was still anxious to exculpate himself to the Public. Either swayed, by a good opinion of his own conduct, or trusting to the kind partiality of his friends, he had flattered the Patriots and, perhaps, himself, that he should be able to lay the burden of American misfortunes, to the account of the minister for the American department. The nation found itself disappointed, but till matters were examined, it was not known decidedly where censure ought to fall. An unwillingness in Government, to admit of a Parliamentary Inquiry, on a military subject, furnished their enemies with an opportunity of drawing conclusions, unfavourable to Ministry. These conclusions, in the usual manner, became topics of patriotic invective and declamation; which, in a manner, extorted an inquiry, that had been once refused, by a vote.

But the result of the Inquiry was very different from what Opposition hoped. It appeared, that rebellion first arose in America, from an ambitious

tious faction; and not from the general sense of the body of the people (*a*). That the reduction of that faction and, consequently, the extinction of rebellion, had uniformly been the object of Administration, and not the conquest or unconditional subjection of the colonies (*b*.) That to accomplish that desirable end, they had not only sent a force sufficient for the purpose, but a much greater one, than was either wished for or expected, by the most sanguine friends of Government in America (*c*). That the army had been amply provided, on all occasions, with every necessary, every implement, every resource of war. That the hands of the General had been so far from being tied up, by instructions, or his operations counteracted, by orders, from home, that the manner of carrying on the war had been left entirely to his judgment and discretion.

(*a*) Evidence of Major General Robertson, before the House of Commons, June 8, 1779, MS p. 9, 10.

(*b*) The object of the war was to enable the loyal subjects of America to get free from the tyranny of the rebels; and to let the country follow its inclination, by returning to the King's government. *Evidence, June 10, p. 18.*—No idea of subduing the Americans—but to assist the good Americans to subdue the bad ones. *Ibid. p. 20.*

(*c*) *Ibid. p. 17.* “The demand of 20,000 men was thought to be rather extravagant.” *Ibid. p. 63.*—“The force we had was adequate to the subduing the rebellion.” *Evidence, June 10, p. 22.*

It

It appeared, that the Americans, instead of overpowering by numbers, had never, together, at one place, above 16,000, and consequently had never been so numerous, in the field, as the army under Sir W—— H-we (*d*). That our troops were well disciplined, and uniformly made the best and most military appearance (*e*). That the enemy were an undisciplined rabble, without order, without arms, without cloathing (*f*); though by procrastinating the war, they attained discipline and acquired military knowledge. That, upon all occasions, the British troops executed their duty, with energy, bravery and effect. That, upon no occasion, those of America behaved, with the spirit, firmness, and intrepidity of soldiers. That the former were victorious, in every assault, attack, and fair battle. That the latter obtained no advantage, but by stratagem or surprise. The inferences deducible, from these facts, were, that the British army were either unskilfully or languidly led; or that the natural strength of the country, and unanimity of its inhabitants, had enabled the Americans to prevent the consequences of losses, and disasters in the field.

(*d*) Evidence, June 10, p. 14.

(*e*) *Ibid.* p. 16.

(*f*) " Except the Maryland Regiment, who were well-clothed and accoutred." *Ibid.* p. 16.

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In support of the first position, it appeared, That the evacuation of Boston had been too long delayed; and undertaken, at length, in an improper season. That the retreat to Halifax furnished the rebels, with an opportunity of strengthening their force at New-York. That the victory obtained at Long-Island might have proved decisive, had it been properly pursued (*g*). That an opportunity of putting an end to the war had been lost at the White-Plains, by a delay in attacking the rebels, when they offered battle. That the distance and injudicious dispositions of the stations chosen in the Jerseys, the placing foreigners, who neither knew the nature nor the language of the country, in a post liable to surprise and attack, the giving the command to an Officer, whom an habitual intemperance had rendered unfit for the discharge of his duty, by presenting an unexpected opportunity to a ruined and dispersed enemy (*b*), encouraged them to re-assemble, and enabled them to obtain an advantage which turned the scale of the war. That the operations, which followed this disaster, were less calcu-

(*g*) " Some of the troops were going to storm the lines. " Gen. H-we called them back.—Putnam, who had the " command of 7000, had detached all but 300.—But this " was not known." *Evidence*, June 9, p. 73, 74.

(*b*) Who had dwindled to 3000 men. G. Robertson's *Evidence*, June 8, p. 16.

lated

lated to retrieve the misfortune, than to encourage the enemy. That the retreat from Quibbleton (*i*), the embarkation of the troops, the tedious expedition to the Delaware, and then to Chesapeak-Bay, the neglecting to improve the victory obtained at the Brandywine, the surprise at German Town, the injudicious manner of assaulting Red-Bank and attacking Mud-Island, the inactive winter at Philadelphia, if not proofs of incapacity, were instances of blameable inactivity, in the General.

With regard to the strength of the country, it appeared, that it presented no advantages to the natives, which it did not hold forth to the invaders. That, on the contrary, it was rather more favourable, to the latter, than to the former. That its great rivers, instead of covering the retreat of the rebels, by being navigable, laid them open to fresh misfortunes, from an enemy, possessing the command of the sea. That Hudson's River, in particular, by dividing the whole continent from North to

(*i*) " Our army (in the Jerseys in 1777) was 17,015 men; that of the rebels, some said 8, some 9, and some 10,000 men in that camp." *Evidence*, June 9, p. 63.—" We had 52,815 men in North America; of those Sir W. Howe had under his command 40,874." *Ibid.* June 10, p. 39.

South, formed a natural and strong barrier, between the revolted provinces. That the seizing this barrier was an object of the first consequence (*k*), towards the extinction of the rebellion. That this object might have been easily obtained, as the river presents an excellent and expeditious water-communication, between New-York and Albany (*l*). That this great advantage rendered the co-operation of the main army, with the troops coming from Canada, as obvious, as it was easy and expeditious; and that, it was the want of such co-operation, that ruined the Northern expedition (*m*), lost an army, turned the scale in favour of rebellion, and loaded Great-Britain, with the expence and danger of a foreign war.

In the course of the evidence taken at home, and more especially by the most authentic information from abroad, it has appeared, that the in-

(*k*) Evidence, p. 51.

(*l*) "An army may pass from New York to Albany (170 miles) by means of Hudson's River, in two days." *Ibid.* p. 47. 75.

(*m*) "Many feared that General Burgoyne's army would be lost, if not supported by Sir W. Howe. I wrote myself, on being informed of the situation of the different armies, I wrote, &c. that if General Burgoyne extricated himself, future ages would have little occasion to talk of Hannibal." *Ibid.* p. 39.

judicious

judicious and inactive management of the war has been the sole obstacle, to the restoration of peace. That a very great majority of the people of America are, and have been, averse to the measures, and disgusted at the tyranny of the Congress (*n*). That they were prevented, from exhibiting their loyalty to their Sovereign and their aversion to usurpation, by the desultory manner, in which the war was conducted, on our part; as it deprived them of permanent protection, and left them exposed to the insolence, cruelty, and revenge of their enemies.

That the quitting of the Jerseys, and the *going to sea*, with the whole army in July 1777, terrified other provinces from submitting, for fear of being deserted. That the three Delaware Counties had offered their submission to Government, on condition of their being *only assisted*, in protecting themselves, against the rebels (*o*). That their application having either been disregarded or neglected, they adhered to the usurped government. That, as a general idea had gone abroad, that protection was uncertain, or rather that desertion was certain (*p*), the vic-

(*n*) Evidence, June 9, p. 12. June 16, *passim*.

(*o*) Evidence, June 16, p. 59.

(*p*) "We soon left the country. The rebels took up the signers (of addresses), banished them, or *sent them to the mines*." *Ibid.* p. 25.

tory

tory at the Brandywine, the taking of Philadelphia, the destruction of the rebel shipping, the reduction of Mud-Island and Red-Bank, were attended with none of those advantages, which accompany successes in war. That no person of great consequence, and few of any consequence at all, submitted after those events. That, when a resolution was formed to evacuate Philadelphia, such as had submitted were *advised* to make their peace (*q*), with the Congress. That some unfortunate persons, who followed that advice, fell a sacrifice, to the relentless violence and unforgiving tyranny of the rebels. That, in short, the want of protection on the one side, and the certainty of punishment for defection, on the other, eradicated every hope from the minds of the loyal, and forced them to swear allegiance to an usurpation, which they despised and abhorred.

(*q*) " Mr. Schumacker mentioned to me what he had told me, a few days before, that Sir William Howe advised him to go over to Washington, and make his peace."— Mr. Galloway's Evidence, June 16, p. 70. — " He (Sir William) gave me the same advice." *Ibid.* p. 71.— Sir Henry Clinton said, " that the game was not up, that the war was not over, but would still be carried on vigorously, and desired that we would not entertain a thought of going over to the enemy." *Ibid.* p. 74.

Though

Though these facts came forward with a force, which commanded conviction, the faction adhered, with invincible obstinacy, to the line of their former conduct. With their usual insult, upon the common feelings and common sense of mankind, they established false premises, and deduced, from those premises, arguments for the total dereliction, and consequently, for the independence of America. They affirmed, that rebellion can never be extinguished; though the want of vigour, in pursuing our successes, has been the demonstrable cause of its continuing so long. They asserted, that a general unanimity prevails against Great Britain; though the adherence of the people to the Congress proceeded, from our not affording them a permanent protection, under the shelter of our arms. They alleged, that the courage of the rebels, and the natural strength of their country, are unsurmountable obstacles; though the first seldom appear in the field, but to fly, and the latter opens every where its bosom to invasion, by the means of extensive arms of the sea, and many great and navigable rivers.

When we deny other public virtues to Opposition, we must allow, that they possess the negative merit of consistency in their political conduct.

conduct. They struck one key, at the beginning of the American troubles, and they have ever since continued the same note, or improved upon it, as events arose. When the tumults began at Boston, when licentiousness and riot exhibited their first wild scenes, in Faneuil-Hall, they encouraged the piece, by applauding the actors. The prints of the departing steps of freedom, like those of Astræa, were only to be found, they affirmed, round the *Tree of Liberty*, on Boston Common. A gloomy despotism had seized Great Britain at home, and it became necessary, that her hands should be fettered, to prevent the recovery of her authority abroad. Every effort on the part of the Mother-country was an exertion of tyranny; every resistance, in the colonies, was an instance of public virtue. The grim tyrant, Arbitrary Power, had taken up arms against that *innocent* little child, American Liberty; and to defend the weak against the strong, was a service of much reputation and little danger.

Obvious as the deceptions, held forth by the party, *ought* to have been, they were attended with success, both *without* and *within* doors. The people thought, that assertions, so confidently and so often repeated, had some foundation in truth; and, though Government knew

the contrary, they acted, as if they gave them credit. The consequence was, that languid measures were adopted, when vigour and exertion were necessary; and, thus, by the forbearance of Administration, the encouragement of Opposition, the inactivity or inability of commanders, that monster, REBELLION, which should have been stifled as soon as born, was fostered and reared to maturity.

Unfortunately for this country, Opposition were permitted, in a manner, to take the lead in American measures. War, and especially rebellion, being one of the greatest evils, that can afflict a state, the most speedy and powerful remedies must be applied, to remove the disease. The only certain road to peace lies through exertion and victory. An anxiety for negotiation, being generally a mark of weakness, too often encourages an enemy to a continuation of resistance. It has also a most unfavourable effect on the spirit of the people, among whose leaders such anxiety appears. This double consideration had rendered the proposing terms a favourite topic of patriotic eloquence. To depress the minds of their countrymen, to elevate those of the rebels; to make the first to doubt, the second to become confident of success; to keep up, if the expression may be used,

the ball of contention between the parties, were circumstances that probably might lengthen the dispute to the verge of some public misfortune ; that misfortune, if it favoured not the views of ambition, might, at least, be turned to the purposes of revenge.

The calamity expected, with so much anxiety, by Opposition, at length arrived. An army was lost in America. A rebellion, which seemed to stagger even under partial and ill-pursued defeats, became firmly established by victory. The spirits of this country began to sink ; and the Faction added to the general depression, by their unmanly oratory. Instead of proposing those vigorous exertions, which the honour, as well as interest of the nation required, they recommended a tame submission to rebels ; an acknowledgment of former errors, and assurances of future amendment. The world, in general, ascribed to artifice a conduct which could not be reconciled to the principles of common sense. Was it probable that insurgents, who had offered no terms during their misfortunes, would receive any in the moment of victory ? Or could it be expected, that a Congress, who had declared for independence, when thirty thousand disciplined soldiers were ready to land on their coast, would relinquish that independence,

ence, after they had made a whole army prisoners of war?

The most sanguine lovers of tranquillity could scarcely derive any hopes from this pacific system; but it was adopted. The Faction thus obtained that degradation of their own country, which seems to have been uniformly a part of their plan. But, as it had been justly apprehended, that American resistance might, at last, cease, through the failure of American resources, it had become necessary to procure powerful allies, for the support of the cause. The defeat and capture of the army, under G——l B——ne, had certainly its weight in the French cabinet. But the deplorable picture given, in both Houses, of the state of this kingdom, could only induce France to throw her weight into the scale of America.

The weight of France having been found insufficient in the operations of the last summer, the necessity of obtaining *another* ally, to the *cause of Liberty*, became apparent during the winter. Every encouragement and every lure were held out to Spain. Under a pretence of bewailing their unfortunate country, Opposition exposed her weakness. Their own declamations shewed that her councils were distracted by faction; and their assertions, relative to the

state of her navy and army, represented her to foreigners as an easy prey. To bring the certainty of her approaching ruin to a point of demonstration, some theorists, acquainted with figures, were employed to make fictitious states of her finances. Even some of the party had the folly, or rather presumption, to assert, in public, that the very independence of Great Britain was in the power of the house of Bourbon (r)

The phlegmatic councils of Spain were, however, too slow for the fire and vehemence of her British friends. Though their eloquence had its proper influence at Madrid, that *désirable* circumstance had been concealed in "Castilian taciturnity." Deprived almost of every hope, from the other side of the Bay of Biscay, the eyes of our Patriots were again turned to the regions beyond the Atlantic. As the treaty at-

(r) Contemptible as such assertions may seem, at home, they make an impression abroad; as appears, from the *Gazette de France du Vendredi 18 Juin 1779*: "Il soutint que les forces de la France étoient presque égales à celle de la Grand-Bretagne en Europe et en Amérique; que l'Espagne tenoit la balance. Il osa prononcer que l'Angleterre ne domineroit plus, sur les mers, qu'autant qu'il plairoit à la Maison de Bourbon."—*L'éloquent Burke* soutint que le Sieur Hartley avoit rien avancé, qui ne fut vrai; il appuya cette opinion, par un détail circonstancié de toutes les forces de l'Espagne.

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tempted last summer had stopt the operations of war, it was expedient to throw negotiation in the way of hostility in the present year. Though the party had reprobated their *own* measure, the conciliatory bills, as degrading and disgraceful, they proposed the renewal of the commission, which those bills authorised. This mode of relief, or rather respite, to rebellion, having been refused, the old proposal, of withdrawing the troops from America, was renewed. This last effort was also unsuccessful; and that melancholy gloom, which usually covers the rear of unsuccessful, political campaigns, began to fall on the party.

A sudden, though not unexpected light, broke through this gloom, and revived their drooping spirits. Spain, being seduced by France, and, perhaps, encouraged by the representations given, in our public assemblies, of our weakness (s), determined to throw her

(s) Le Sieur Thowfend, Fox et Burke furent, parmi les opposans, ceux qui signalèrent davantage contre cette motion, en observant que la nation dans l'état allarmant ou celle se trouvoit s'épuisait par des dépenses énormes, tandis que chaque jour lui decouvroit quelque nouvelle ennemi; que l'Espagne alloit immanquablement se declarer; que l'Irlande, menacée d'une invasion, avoit pris cette circonstance pour se soulever contre le gouvernement Anglois; que l'Ecosse *même* étoit pleine de mécontents. Gazette de France du Vendredi 18 Juin 1779.

weight

weight in the scale of our enemies. Of *one hundred* injuries, which she had received, she only specified *two*, and proved *none*. With peculiar attention to her worthy friends *out* of office, she pointed her whole resentment against the British Ministry. These men, it seems, had grievously offended this froward Dame; but how, or where, she could not tell. When she has time to recollect the circumstances, BUCCARELLI, or some other old Spanish acquaintance, will, no doubt, communicate them to C——l B——ré, and then we shall know the whole.

The uniform conduct of Opposition seemed calculated, if not intended, to arm Spain in favour of France and America; yet they affected a degree of melancholy when that event was announced. With a pernicious consistency, they dwelt on the weakness of Great Britain, and on the force of her enemies. Instead of standing forth with that manly boldness, which other patriots have either felt or feigned, in times of peril, they unbraced the nerves of their country with womanish lamentations. To magnify the danger, they pretended to recommend unanimity; and to promise support to the S——n, whilst they undermined his just influence and authority. But the notes of affected sorrow were soon changed for the voice of discord; and it

became apparent, that the party lamented their own condition more than the state of their country.

In the preceding detail, many circumstances are omitted, equally descriptive of the conduct, and expressive of the designs of Opposition, with those that have been related. But, as the intention of this Essay is only to give a general idea of the subject, it was thought unnecessary to descend to every particular. One obvious observation will naturally suggest itself to the mind of the Reader : That an Opposition begun in ambition, has degenerated, through disappointment, into a species of insanity ; and that, in attempting to ruin the Ministry, the party have given a fatal stab to the honour and interests of their country.

In every popular government, opposition is not only natural, but, when conducted on liberal principles, useful, and even necessary. There is a kind of charm in authority, which may induce the most virtuous magistrates to extend it too far, if subject to no controul. The original object of a national representative, was to watch over the political rights of the people, and to check the incroachments of the executive power. The trust is great ; and, strictly speaking, ought to be solely appropriated to the public

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lic good. Those who use it as an engine of private ambition and personal interest, meet with forgiveness, on account of the frequency of the practice. But the employing a weapon, given for the defence of our country, against its existence, is a species of political assassination which no example can justify, no state ought to pass without punishment.

If the great lines of the conduct of Opposition, during the last session of parliament, have been fairly traced, in the preceding disquisition, no terms can be too severe, no indignation too violent, in exposing the principles and plans of the party. If the account, which has been given of their assertions and actions, has been exaggerated, the Public will judge of *both* with more candour. But, unfortunately for Great Britain, the stamp of truth has been affixed to the representation, contained in this Essay, by the most uncontrovertible of all arguments, the events of the times : events unparalleled in the history of any other age or country.

Let the consequences of an opposite conduct, in the party, be considered, for a moment. Let it be supposed, that, instead of abetting rebellion and encouraging foreign war, they had declared that, when the American Congress avowed

avowed Independence; and especially when they leagued with France, the grounds of the original question were entirely changed. That, as friends of their country, they had resolved to strengthen her hands, to restore her authority, to protect her interests, and to recover her honour. That the object of their pursuit had been to render Ministers responsible for remissness in carrying on the war; or for obstinacy in refusing adequate and honourable conditions of peace. That they had been the first to inquire into the failure of measures in the execution; not to assert, without examination, that the error lay in the cabinet and not in the field. That they had taken measures to ascertain, by what mismanagement or misconduct, in commanders, an army had been lost, to a contemptible enemy, and a superior fleet had returned from action, without a victory? That, instead of receiving into the bosom of their party, a general, who had quitted his command, in the midst of war, they had inquired, why the advantages, he either possessed or obtained, had not been more decisively improved?

To render still more finished the picture of the reverse of their actual proceedings, let it be supposed, that instead of announcing, to all Europe, the weakness of Great Britain, they

had, in their speeches and their actions, exhibited a spirited and disinterested love for their country, an unanimity to arm her exertions, not to clog her measures, a manly boldness to meet, to break, to disconcert the combinations of her domestic and foreign enemies. What would have been, in such a case, the present situation of public affairs? What the state of public opinion, relative to themselves? The resistance of America must have ceased. France might have given up the contest; and the junction of Spain would have been prevented.

One should suppose it hardly possible, that an Opposition, consisting of several men, whose rank and fortune connect their private interest with that of the public, should follow a line of conduct, that leads to the destruction of their country, and, consequently, to their own ruin. This is an argument which they themselves repeat, and think unanswerable. The truth is, that every faction may avail itself of the same argument; but general reasoning must fall to the ground, when contradicted by facts. There is a pride and obstinacy in party, which disdain to acknowledge error; and, therefore, though Opposition may, nay must, perceive the pernicious tendency of their conduct, they choose to persist, rather than own a fault.

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An opportunity offered itself lately, which might have reflected credit on Opposition, without the supposed disgrace of changing their former opinions. The Spanish *Rescript* furnished this opportunity; yet the nation cannot see, without indignation and astonishment, that Acts indispensably necessary for the safety of the State have been combated, with all the virulence and obstinacy of oratory, in every stage of their progress. That the party clogged every measure for arming the kingdom, by sea and land, whilst they asserted, that the enemy were ready to invade our coast, and that a few days might bring the report of their guns to the ears of both houses of parliament. That, when a spirit of unanimity and exertion became the duty of all lovers of their country, the faction announced, with a species of savage triumph, that the City of London would not vote a man or a shilling, for the national defence, in the present emergency. That in short they presumed to assert in public, that the tyranny of France and Spain would be more welcome to them, than the continuance of their rivals in power.

After such proofs of aversion to the public good, it will be in vain to hope for any reformation in Opposition. The distress in which they have involved their country, can advance but

one step farther, to furnish them with an opportunity of retreating from the line of their misconduct. That step is an invasion of this Island; the last effort of the conspiracy of our foreign enemies. In that critical moment, a moment which every good subject would meet with spirit and confidence in his cause, there is every reason to fear, that Opposition would be still an Opposition. Such has been the inveteracy which a consciousness of criminality, a jealousy of rivals, a habit of opposing the interests and degrading the dignity of their country, and a despair embittered by an unpopular and fruitless contest of many years, have mixed with every spring of their actions, every power of their minds.

Upon the whole, we may fairly affirm, that neither the talents they possess, nor the conduct they have pursued, are likely to recommend Opposition as proper persons for managing public affairs at the present crisis. If our situation is alarming, we must look for relief to the resources of the kingdom, and the spirit of our countrymen, and not to those, who have uniformly endeavoured to depreciate the first, and to damp the second. The truth is, that, very fortunately for this country, this desponding party have hitherto failed in their views of convincing us that our ruin is inevitable.

We feel the contrary, in the internal vigour of the state, and in that unanimity of sentiment among the people, which forbids us to connect danger with despair.

But why should either be mentioned, upon the present occasion? This country, with much smaller resources, and much less unanimity, has repeatedly weathered more dreadful storms than that which only *seems* to threaten it at present. In the first Dutch war, France and Denmark joined the enemy against England (*b*). She had no friendly port on the continent, from the Pyrenees to the pole; no ally but the Bishop of Munster. The Dutch came out, to a decisive battle, with one hundred and thirteen ships of war, eleven fireships, and seven yachts; led by able, experienced, and brave commanders. France, co-operating with her allies, entered the Channel with forty ships of the line. The usual revenue of England amounted only to the annual sum of one million two hundred thousand pounds; and the supplies granted, for the year, exceeded not double that sum. Our standing army scarcely consisted of five thousand men; and there was no militia in the kingdom.

(*b*) In 1665, 1666, &c. *Vide* Life of Clarendon, Burnet, Rapin, Ralph, &c. &c.

The nation was, in the mean time, visited with two of the most dreadful calamities that can afflict a people, pestilence and fire. Near eighty thousand persons had been carried off by the first, in London alone. The city had become a kind of desert; and grass was observed to grow in the middle of Cheapside (c). The plague followed those who fled to the country; and terror and death filled every corner of the kingdom. This scourge was followed by a fire, which consumed fifteen out of the twenty-six wards of the city, consisting of four hundred streets and lanes, thirteen thousand houses, and eighty-nine parish-churches (d). But these misfortunes neither damped the spirits of the people, nor obstructed the measures of Government. Our fleets, though much inferior, fought, and vanquished the enemy. The alliance against us was broken, and an honourable and advantageous peace was obtained.

In the year 1690, the French fleet entered the English channel, appeared before Plymouth, on the 20th of June, drove the combined fleets of England and Holland, from the back of the isle of Wight, engaged and totally defeated them, in a general battle, near Beachy-head.

(c) Baker, p. 637.

(d) Vide Clarendon, Heath, Burnet.

In this unfortunate action we lost eight ships of the line, besides many more, that were rendered unfit for service; and the shattered remains of the fleet were forced to shelter themselves in the Thames (e). The French rode triumphant, for some months, in the Channel. They insulted our sea-ports; and threatened our coasts with invasion. There were, at the time, no more than *five thousand* regular troops in England; the militia were not arrayed; King William was, in a manner, confined to Ireland, by the superiority of the enemy at sea.

The nation was, at the same time, distracted and divided in opinion, on account of a disputed succession. Public credit, during the whole war, was so low, that soon after this period, Exchequer and Navy Bills became almost of as little value, as the paste-board dollars of the American Congress; and even the notes of the Bank of England were at *forty per cent.* discount (f). Near *six thousand* trading vessels were taken by the French in the course of the war (g). Notwithstanding these misfortunes, the vigour of Government and spirit of the people surmounted all difficul-

(e). Lord Torrington's Letter, July 1, 1690.

(f) Kennet, Ralph, Burnet, &c. &c.

(g) Vide Journals of the Commons, 1698.

ties. The enemy was disappointed, in all his ambitious views, an honourable peace was obtained, the revolution confirmed, the protestant succession secured, and public credit restored.

In the present times, our resources are much greater, our spirit equal, and our danger less, than at either of those periods. We have an ample revenue, an untainted credit, a great and a growing navy. Instead of *five thousand* men, we have above *sixty thousand* disciplined troops, for our internal defence; and we have a certain prospect of half as many more, in the space of a few months. A spirit of unanimity, vigour, and exertion, begins to pervade the whole kingdom. Our nobility and gentry, with a spirit becoming Britons, either serve in our constitutional defence, the militia, or with their influence and purses exert themselves, in raising new corps. The greatest commercial society, in the kingdom, has set a noble example to their fellow-subjects, by an unanimous and powerful aid to the state, in the present emergency. Voluntary subscriptions, for raising soldiers, and for giving a bounty to sailors, have been opened, in several places; and the same spirit will diffuse itself through both the British isles. Such as are debarred, by infirmities and
years,

years, from personal service, will undoubtedly, exhibit, on the present occasion, their love for their country, and their zeal for its safety.

Instead of being depressed, with a sense of danger, all ranks and degrees of men feel that elevation, which threatened perils excite, in generous minds. Instead of looking forward to future disgraces or disasters, they reflect on the glory of former times. The posterity of those, who conquered at Poitiers, Cressy, and Agincourt, and annexed France itself to the English crown, cannot form to themselves any fears from a French invasion. On the contrary, when they have sufficiently prepared, for security at home, they will act offensively abroad; and carry back to the bosom of the enemy that terror, which he vainly hopes to create.

If we are at war in America, we have not the burden of a continental war; that sink, in which our treasure has always disappeared, without any hope of return. The money laid out on our navy, or expended in our Colonies, will return to the center of the kingdom, through all the veins of commerce. Our trade has been protected, against the enemy, to a degree unknown in any former war. We have lost, in no quarter of the world, any
I territory

territory without an equivalent; in some we have gained. In the West Indies, we are still superior to our enemies. We have eradicated them entirely, from the East Indies, and we have a flattering prospect of a speedy termination of resistance, in North America.

In the first stage of a war, the advantage of attack is possessed, by that nation, who first breaks the peace. The disadvantages of defence must, for some time, remain with its opponent. A state possessing such extensive dominions, as Great Britain, cannot be supposed, to be invulnerable, on every side. We may suffer some losses, at the beginning; for what people was ever uniformly successful in war? The Romans themselves were not always invincible. They frequently lost provinces and armies; yet they rose superior to all nations. The profits and losses of war can only be estimated, on the day, which concludes a peace. Let us be unanimous among ourselves, and that day cannot be distant, disadvantageous, or dishonourable; on the contrary, it will be attended with that glory, which the spirit and exertion of a great state cannot fail to acquire.

THE END.

